

Page 14, Paragraph beginning on Line 17 (Amended) Samples of the contents of

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databases **240** and **250** are shown in FIGS. 3, 4A and 4B. The specific data and fields illustrated in these figures represent only sample records stored in each database. In most cases, the fields shown in FIGS. 3, 4A and 4B are straightforward and self-explanatory. It is to be understood that the data and the fields, as well as the number of databases, can be readily modified from the described embodiment and adapted to provide variations for receiving and processing requests for preferred categories of seating. Furthermore, each field may contain more or less information. For example, the address field may be divided into separate fields containing street address, apartment number, city, state, and zip code. Also, in other embodiments, the databases may be combined or divided into additional databases.

Page 15, Paragraph beginning on Line 17 (Amended) FIGS. 4A and 4B illustrate an

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exemplary reservation database **250** that stores information for each reservation, including passenger requests for a preferred category of seating. Referring to FIG. 4A, the reservation database maintains a plurality of records, such as records **475** – **499**, each associated with a different reservation. For each reservation identified by the reservation number in field **405**, the reservation database **250** stores personal information, such as the passenger's name, address and credit card number, in fields **410**, **415**, and **420**, respectively. In addition, the reservation database **250** includes the passenger type in field **425**; that is, whether the passenger is an adult, student, child or infant. Further, the reservation database **250** stores the class of seating the

passenger is confirmed for in field **430**, such as coach, business or first class. The reservation database **250** also includes the passenger's request for a selected category of seating, and allows a certain number of elements for each request to be stored. A passenger's request can consist of multiple elements. For example, a passenger can request an aisle seat in an emergency exit row adjacent to a certain passenger. This request has three elements: element A, an aisle seat, element B, a seat in an emergency exit row and element C, a seat adjacent to a certain passenger. Referring to FIG. 4B, the elements of the request are recorded in fields **435**, **440**, **445** and **450**, where the maximum number of fields may be predefined by the airline. The illustrative reservation database **250** shows fields for storing four elements of a request. In one embodiment, an airline may choose to limit the number of elements a passenger can specify within a request. In a further embodiment, the airline may choose to honor only the first two elements or any two specified elements of the request. Once the overall seating evaluation is executed by the central controller **100**, the reservation database **250** stores guaranteed elements of the request in field **465**. Finally, the "flexible" seat assignment is stored in field **460** of the reservation database **250**. If, however, the passenger has requested a direct seat assignment, then that seat number is stored in field **465**. As the overall seating evaluation is executed and the passengers are reassigned, the "flexible" seat assignments are continuously updated. At any instant, the reservation database **250** can be accessed to determine what the current seat assignment is for a given passenger. Once the transition point, which is the instant when the "flexible" seat assignments become "permanent", is defined, the seat number in field **460** will be transferred to and stored in field **465**, the field for a "permanent" seat assignment. At this point, the passenger can no longer be reassigned to a different seat.